

## **Surrey Schools Forum**

### **Minutes of Meeting**

Wednesday 11 July 2018 1pm at Three Rivers Academy, Walton on Thames

*Approved by the Forum at their meeting on 28 September 2018*

### **Present**

#### **School and academy members:**

Rhona Barnfield (Chair)	Howard of Effingham School	Academy member
Kate Keane (Vice Chair)	Ewell Grove Infant and Nursery School	Primary Head
Joanne Hastings	Ottershaw CE Infant and Junior Schools	Primary Head
Clare McConnell	Bisley CE (A) Primary	Primary head
Lynn Tarrant	Shawfield Primary	Primary Head
Paul Jensen	Sunnydown School	Special school head
Geoffrey Hackett	Stepgates Community Primary	Primary Governor
David Euridge	Reigate Valley and other PRUs	PRU member
Ben Bartlett	Hinchley Wood School	Academy member
Stephanie Gibson	Bletchingley Village Primary	Academy member <sup>1</sup>
Ian Hylan	Tomlinscote School	Academy member <sup>2</sup>
James Malley	Therfield School	Academy member
Seb Sales	Connaught Junior School	Academy member <sup>3</sup>
Geoff Wyss	George Abbot School	Academy member
David Monk	Pond Meadow SchoolL	Special academy member

#### **Non school members**

Sian Bath	Private, voluntary & independent nursery providers <sup>4</sup>
Joe Dunne	RC Diocese of Arundel and Brighton
Jonathan Gambier	Guildford Diocese (C of E)
Tamsin Honeybourne	Union representative en Education Joint Committee
Andrea Collings	Family Voice Surrey

#### **Local Authority Officers**

Liz Mills (LM)	Assistant Director for Schools and Learning
Lynn McGrady (LMcG)	Head of Finance for Schools (clerk to Forum)
David Green (DG)	Senior Principal Accountant (Schools Funding)
Frank Offer (FO)	Head of Market Strategy
Kerry Randle (KR)	Vulnerable learners strategic lead

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<sup>1</sup> Present for items 1-5

<sup>2</sup> Present for items 1-4

<sup>3</sup> Present for items 1-5

<sup>4</sup> Present for items 1-4(part)

## 1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from:

Donna Harwood-Duffy	Dorking Nursery School	Nursery school head
Katie Aldred	Bagshot Infant School	Primary head
Tess Trewinnard	Wonersh and Shamley Green C of E Primary	Primary Head
Eric Peacock	Thorpe C of E Primary	Primary Governor
Fred Greaves	Oakwood School	Secondary governor
Annette Crozier	Manor Mead and Walton Leigh Schools	Special school governor
Matthew Armstrong-Harris	Rodborough	Academy member
Sir Andrew Carter	South Farnham Primary	Academy member
Nick Trier	Teachers' Joint Committee	
Jayne Dickinson	East Surrey College	Post 16 provider

## 2 Declarations of interest

Item 4: Ben Bartlett (Cullum centre)

Item 9: Clare McConnell.

## 3 Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting (1 May 2018)

The minutes of the meeting of 1 May were agreed as accurate.

There were no matters arising.

## 4 SEND –sustainability

LM asked the Forum to consider the challenges facing the SEND system in Surrey and asked for members' support for the necessary transformation programme and for the need for time to develop it

Growth in demand had not been matched by growth in funding, Substantial savings had been delivered in 2017/18 (£6.9m). 200 more specialist places had been provided locally in order to allow needs to be met closer to home, but demand for specialist places had been higher than expected. Further additional places were being opened in 2018/19, plus new free schools in future years. The LA would continue to take every opportunity to add additional places to existing special schools and centres but these steps would not be enough on their own. The highest growth in EHCPs was being seen in the early years. There was also a need to think how best to support lifelong learning for post 16s.

Much of the growth was in children with ASD or SEMH, the most difficult to place were those with a combination of needs. If current rates of growth continued, there would be at least 14,000 EHCPs by 2023. A graduated approach to meeting need was required, whereby needs could be met without the need for an EHCP. The proportion of children going into specialist places (and particularly NMI placements) was higher in Surrey than in many other

similar LAs, although other LAs were experiencing similar demand growth and working through similar problems.

Too little was being done to support children with SEND at the early stages, eg there might be a wait of 16 weeks for a first assessment and assessment places (in specialist provision) could not be secured without an EHCP. Thus our practices drove demand for EHCPs.

Provision for ASD and SEMH was particularly difficult and there was a need to change the type of provision available. A large proportion of NMI placements were for these needs. Despite rich provision of special schools, Surrey was unable to meet needs in the same way as some other LAs could. Surrey was a significant outlier in its use of external placements. The LA was looking at practice in other LAs, but would need to find a solution which was right for Surrey, drawing on experience elsewhere. For example, Hertfordshire (a very low user of external placements) had had a local “cluster” based approach, but this had come under increasing strain due to financial constraints; Gloucestershire had developed a graduated response model.

The high needs block overspend had now been rolled forward for two years, some planned savings had not been achieved (eg in residential provision because of the complexity of the work necessary), and there was a further £20m of growth pressure, leading to a forecast overspend of £30m in 2018/19. This was not sustainable and thus there was a need to do things differently for children.

The council had a new vision for 2030, with a number of areas for transformation, of which SEND ranked high. A sum had been set aside to support the transformation programme and an outline business case had been submitted for SEND work, for £2.5m revenue plus £7.5m capital. The Cabinet had supported the outline case, and a full draft business plan was required by 10 August. The aims included:

- more timely support for children and preventing escalation of need,
- avoiding the need for statutory plans where possible,
- developing more effective local provision.

Large scale growth in state maintained specialist places might be necessary in the short term but was not a long term strategy.

A few months ago there had been 150 SEND pupils without a place for September 2018, and there were still 46 such pupils. Many of those placed had been placed in NMI schools because of lack of capacity in state maintained schools or because of the complex arrangements needed.

There was a need to develop policies and processes to support change and to work out what the “team around the child” and “team around the school” needed to look like.

LM suggested the following principles for transformation of SEND:

- Work with children and families and focus on children and child centred practices;
- Develop resilience, independence and emotional wellbeing;
- Early identification of need;

- In the majority of cases an EHCP should not be seen as essential;
- Recognise that a child and family may have a broad range of needs and that an EHCP would not meet all of these needs.

There was a need to “co-produce” and to work at pace, to identify what a sustainable model could look like.

A more graduated model was needed, eg Gloucestershire had a much more nuanced funding model: Profile, Plan, Multi agency plan then EHCP.

Even if Surrey demand was reduced to the lowest quartile of SE counties it would still not be sustainable. Flat funding meant no scope for growth. However, funding was not being used as effectively as it might be. There were universal services and high end specialist services, but there was little between.

The £2.5m investment could include:

- Increasing the number of educational psychologists;
- More outreach work, to support a larger number of schools;
- More speech and language therapy, including access without the need for an EHCP;
- Developing skills in schools.

One member noted that changes to LEAP and Portage had been deferred. LM advised that, while the LEAP pilot had benefited children enormously, its extension required a substantial investment and more evidence was needed to finalise the case.

SEND transport costs totalled £28m and transport costs were often significant relative to placement costs.

Members suggested that:

- schools pressed for EHCPs as the only source of additional funding, and that they could do more if funding was available at an earlier stage;
- Costs of the EHCP process were a concern (perhaps £15-20k each);
- EHCP demand was often driven by parents and/or by gaps in health/ CAMHS provision
- Demand for Access to Education service was increasing because of parental anxiety about sending children (with SEND?) to mainstream schools.

LM sought to review funding so that it could be made available at an earlier stage. She agreed that both placement costs and EHCP process costs were of concern.

LM noted the need to recommission CAMHS services, but this would take some time.

Changes needed to be identified which had a high short term impact and which were not complex to deliver.

LM suggested that few people knew about the family information service and that Surrey's local offer might not be sufficiently visible. One member asked that the LA made a menu of services available for school pastoral staff and parents, avoiding the inefficiency of individual schools creating their own.

One member reported that special schools had viewed the proposals positively, but that quality of decision making was the key; the right places had to be found for the right children, Short term investment was needed in more specialist places, but that was only a short term solution.

There was concern at the administrative cost of maintaining EHCPs which had no funding attached. LM advised that there were around 800 of these, often arising from the conversion of statements and LDAs to EHCPs. Many of these were in colleges. These were being reviewed, but should not be closed down without checking whether the EHCP was still making a difference to the child.

Members expressed concern at the quality of some plans and at limited attendance by LA officers at annual reviews. LM advised that, with 100 caseworkers for 8000+ EHCPs, there was simply not enough caseworker time to routinely attend annual reviews. She suggested that the answer was to move to a more graduated model, with less dependence on EHCPs, rather than to increase the number of case workers to support the current unsustainable model.

There was a need to look at all of the funding available to support all the needs of all Surrey children. In 2017/18 there had been an underspend of £9.5m across the Schools and Early Years blocks. The LA proposed to use £5.9m of that underspend to offset the high needs overspend brought forward from 2017/18 as part of a cost containment plan, The LA would also contribute £2.2m of unringfenced grant, in addition to investing in the transformation work. The transfer of the underspend was an opportunity cost to schools because the funding had never been allocated to individual schools.

LM asked the Forum to

- Support SEND transformation work with colleagues;
- help to deliver sustainable transformation;
- Recognise that the issue is of such magnitude that a financially sustainable system cannot be delivered in the next two years
- Support the contribution of £5.9m of 2017/18 School and Early Years DSG underspend to high needs.

Members would not be asked to vote because they had not had the opportunity to consult colleagues. But in order to move forward with provision for children we needed to end 2018/19 without such a significant overspend.

SEND transformation was a major priority for the council's leadership team

LMcG circulated a table showing the components of the £9.6m Schools and Early Years DSG underspend and the origins of the sums being asked for:

- Schools: total underspend £6.471m of which £4.575m<sup>5</sup> was being asked for  
The remaining £1.896m was made up of £1.2m which had been known in time to build into 2018/19 school budgets (ie it was spent), a further £0.328m of de-delegated primary schools contingency which had been refunded to schools in 2018/19 and £368k of unspent maintained primary schools contingency, not yet committed but which would normally go back to maintained primary schools.

The £4.575m being asked for arose mainly from underspends on growing schools, falling rolls, and rates contingencies,

- Early Years (£3.191m of which £1.332m was being asked for)  
The total underspend had been £3.191m, £1.0m could be transferred without exceeding the 7% limit in “central spend” in 2017/18 and a further £0.3m represented late DFE funding covering an increase in takeup which had already been funded by LA funds. The underspend was largely due to overestimating demand.  
This left £1.859m of early years underspend which could be added to the early years block in 2019/20.

LM suggested that previous attempts to change the system might not have recognised the need for system wide change and had not secured sufficient investment or wide enough support. Often good practice had been found in small LAs and in discussions with DfE it had been recognised that some of the practices simply wouldn't work in an LA as large as Surrey.

One member suggested working in smaller areas within Surrey. The Chair suggested that SALP was a good example of local headteachers taking joint responsibility for local solutions.

FO reported on behalf of the Early Years reps, as Sian Bath had left the meeting, that there was recognition of the scale of the challenge and the importance of early identification and of supporting children at the earliest opportunity. While the need for the transfer was recognised, Frank sought assurances that the remaining underspend should roll forward into early years budgets in 2019/20. The early years sector would like to do more to support SEND and inclusion, which these resources could then support.

LM advised that there was no intention to utilise an underspend on early years, beyond the proposed transfer.

One member agreed that transformation was needed to close the funding gap, but doubted whether it was possible to close it and whether the proposals would produce the long term changes required.

Another member felt confident for the first time that there was a plan in place, with more detail than ever before. The challenge was presenting to colleagues who had not been part of the discussions. She saw little alternative to the proposals.

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<sup>5</sup> For clarification the £4.575m was initially “topslliced” from all primary and secondary schools, including academies

LM advised that little could be done to reduce forecast spending pressures in the current year and possibly in the next. Changes to placements could only be effected over several years, by making new places available and filling them as children entered the system or reached key stage transitions-hence it took time. Although there was media interest in SEND funding, she doubted whether this would lead to increased funding. The LA and schools needed to work together on a solution.

Other points made in discussions included:

- Change was always going to take time;
- There were already examples of collaborative working in Surrey, eg headteachers of SEMH schools and PRUs were working closely together on earlier and smoother transition arrangements;
- It was important to maintain early years provision;
- FO's reviews of NMI providers had provided useful information which had never previously been available;
- The schools block underspend represented funds which had never been allocated to individual schools, but might have represented over conservative budgeting. A request for a similar transfer at the end of 2018/19 would be difficult to sell to colleagues either in schools or early years;
- It was important for people to buy into transformation.

The Chair noted that the proposal was specifically to help with the current high needs overspend. She suggested that members emphasised to their colleagues the major investment which the LA was making in the business case.

Members thought redeveloping such a large system would cost more than £2.5m revenue and £7.5m capital. LM agreed, that more investment would likely be necessary over time.

One member argued that mainstream schools could do much more effective work on SEND if they were "funded properly". LM suggested there needed to be a "really open conversation" on this.

There was a consensus that supported the need to transfer £5.9m underspend to offset the high needs block overspend carried forward from 2017/18, and agreement to the principles of transformation proposed.

#### **4a AOB item from Vice Chair: Request for initial funding for school to school support offer of school improvement services**

The Vice chair proposed that "pump priming" funding for a school to school offer of universal school improvement services, should be found from part of the underspend on de-delegated school specific contingency. Work was being done on such an offer and it was to be launched in mid September. A transformation grant had been anticipated from DfE to build a local school to school offer, but such a grant now seemed unlikely. LM advised that there had been discussions on transformation funding to develop a school led system but that it appeared that DfE was rethinking the system. The Chair suggested

that the school to school system of school improvement was being implemented with little work at national level.

The Vice Chair suggested that the cost from September 2018-March 2019 might be around £100k, including 1fte and materials, mainly to make schools aware of what was available. In time it should become self financing but no-one knew how long that would take.

The Vice Chair asked for funding to be found in 2018/19 from the surplus on the maintained primary schools' contingency. She suggested that if the launch were deferred to April 2019 momentum would be lost and the launch wouldn't happen. A school improvement system was important in improving inclusion.

Finance officers noted that the DfE regulations only allowed DfE funding of school improvement via the de-delegation route (which meant deducting funding from maintained primary and secondary schools). In 2018/19 maintained primary schools had supported this for some aspects of school improvement, but maintained secondary schools had not. In 2019/20 maintained primary and secondary schools could be asked to approve "de-delegation" for a universal school to school offer. Academies would have to choose to contribute<sup>6</sup>

One member suggested that the transfer to the high needs block should be reduced by £100k and that could be used to fund the universal offer. Finance officers advised that that was not permissible under the DfE regulations.

LM would wish resources to be found in 2018/19, for the reasons set out above. She saw it as important for the schools community to seize the opportunity to develop a school to school system. She stated this might be through pooling capacity rather than direct funds.

The Chair suggested that a proposal for "de-delegation" for a universal offer was included in the 2019/20 funding consultation, to be set at £100,000 in the absence of any better information.

The Chair summarised that there was genuine support for the initiative and a willingness to make it work despite the technicalities of the funding regulations. The Vice Chair and LM agreed to try and identify a solution to develop the system in 2018/19.

## **5 Future provision of Specialist Teachers for Inclusive Practice (STIPS)**

KR advised that the STIPs worked with 212 open cases at the end of June. The aim was to move behaviour support to a graduated model from September, linking into the graduated response theme, focusing on children who were on SEN support or had EHCPs for behaviour, as these were particularly vulnerable to placement breakdown. Work might be directly with the family, the child or the school. They had looked at 78 recent exclusions

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<sup>6</sup> As would maintained special schools and pupil referral units, because "de-delegation" does not apply to maintained special schools and pupil referral units

and tracked interventions and trigger points, in the hope of better understanding how to prevent exclusions. There was a strong link between exclusions and EHCPs. Sometimes schools saw exclusion as necessary in order to secure an EHCP. Physical assault and violence were now the main reasons for exclusions.

The service also aimed to raise awareness of the local offer and to encourage voluntary and charitable sector providers to include their services in the local offer and in the family information service. The service for vulnerable learners had specialist leaders of education for behaviour.

Funding for behaviour was “de-delegated” from maintained primary schools. The service budget in 2018/19 is £864k but the service was being redesigned and the budget might be lower next year. Proposals could be included in the autumn schools funding consultation paper. Where schools were outside “de-delegation” and did not buy back, they managed these issues internally.

The service had data on children missing education or not attending full time or registered as electively home educated, Education welfare officers discussed with schools where additional support might be needed for such pupils, and as such were an important part of the early help system.

Members noted that:

- \* intervention was needed before the EHCP stage;
- \* work with primary schools on the characteristics of excluded pupils had identified a wide range of what was considered behaviour justifying permanent exclusion
- \* work across phases could be useful eg continuing from primary into year 7.

David Monk asked how the impact of central services was established, again citing SALP as an example of a successful school based service with local ownership. KR noted that very different models of SALP were used in different areas.

LM sought suggestions as to what schools might want from the service from September which would have an impact.

She expressed concern that there could not be a single consistent offer irrespective of funding arrangements,

LMcG reminded the Forum that “de-delegation” was expected to have a limited future.

## **6 Early years**

Frank Offer advised that the consultation on changes to early years funding in 2019/20 would be run earlier than in recent years, and would be integrated with the school funding consultation. It would close before the next meeting of Schools Forum. The key principles had been discussed at a meeting of the Early Years Phase Council.

No increase in DFE funding rates was expected, but the contingency had been set at a high level in 2018/19 because of uncertainty over takeup of the

30 hr entitlement. Experience suggested that the level of contingency could be reduced, which would then allow a small increase in hourly rate and an increase in SEND funding in line with the SEND transformation agenda. The consultation paper would contain more details.

It was proposed that part of the 5% of 3-4 year old funding which could be held centrally would be used to establish an inclusion fund for 2 year olds.

Frank sought comments on the principles, which would inform the final consultation paper.

The Forum had no comments to make.

## **7 NFF update: Implications for 2019/20 school budgets**

LMcG circulated a set of slides on NFF issues. She noted that DfE had not yet published any information on schools funding for 2019/20 (expected in July) but that no significant changes were expected. If the NFF was implemented as planned a year ago, Surrey would gain £28m from the NFF, although this was being phased in, and might be reduced if deprivation levels in Surrey fell.

The DfE allocated funding to LAs, which then determined individual schools' budgets. The main local choices were

- How fast to move to the NFF;
- The level of the minimum funding guarantee;
- The level at which to set the minimum per pupil level (MPPL).

The level of the ceiling on gains was a consequence of the above choices. The MPPL largely benefited large schools with low levels of deprivation, Surrey had introduced it last year because schools had expected it.

LMcG reminded the Forum that the school level illustrations, to be published shortly by the DfE, would be based on Oct 2017 pupil numbers and characteristics, whereas the LA allocations to schools for 2019/20 had to be based on Oct 2018 pupil numbers and characteristics and would thus be different.

LMcG proposed modelling the fastest possible transition to NFF and various other options, plus various levels of minimum funding guarantee. We expected the regulations to permit an MFG of up to 0.5%. A higher MFG than now meant a lower ceiling or slower progress towards the NFF.

The Surrey funding consultation paper would be circulated in September, with outcomes reported to Schools Forum on 28 September and then to Cabinet in October.

The Chair asked for members to have the opportunity to see an advance copy of the consultation paper in August, to read at their discretion.

## **8 Autumn consultation: discussion of potential items**

To include:

- Moving to NFF
- High needs
- Early years
- Universal school improvement offer
- Element 2 high needs funding for mainstream sixth forms

The TJC rep questioned why we should look at a traded model for union facilities time if we could legally continue to “de-delegate”. It was agreed to leave the model as is.

## **9 Variation to growing school funding criteria (Bisley CE Primary School)**

DG explained that Bisley CE Primary School had, unusually increased PAN simultaneously across all year groups, rather than one year at a time starting from year R. The Forum had approved an unusual growing school allocation for the school in December 2014, but in fact pupil numbers had not increased at that point. Pupil numbers now exceeded the old PAN in several year groups. He proposed funding additional pupils above the old PAN from September, and vacancies for three years, for the first three year groups to exceed the old PAN. (Sept 2017 year 3 and Sept 2018 year R and 1).

DG suggested that the proposed additional costs were within the accuracy of the 2018/19 growing schools budget estimates.

Clare McConnell, as headteacher of the school, advised that pupil numbers had been 265 in Oct 2017 and were expected to be 302 in Sept 2018. A large number of the additional pupils had SEND or were eligible for the pupil premium.

Jo Hastings had been told that there was still more building work planned for the area.

This was an issue for Schools Forum approval. Only school and academy members could vote

The Forum approved the proposed growing schools funding for Bisley CE Primary School by 9-0 on a show of hands.

## **10 Schools forum issues**

Items for next meeting (28 September 2018 at NASUWT, Woking)

- Outcome of schools funding consultation

## **11 Any other business (if agreed by Chair in advance)**

Update on Surrey Schools Reward review

Slides on this subject were circulated

School improvement (taken earlier and described above as item 4a)

The Chair noted Lynn Tarrant; imminent retirement and thanked her, on behalf of the Forum, for her contribution to the Schools Forum.

**Meeting ended** 4.05pm

**Date of next meeting:** Friday 28 September 2018 1pm at NASUWT, Send